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RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL//SCJ2//
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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, I/GWHA, WHA, WHA/PDA, WHA/BSC
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WAYNE'S MEETING WITH NICHOLAS NEGROPONTE ON "ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD" PROGRAM

Summary

1. Ambassador Wayne met November 22 with Nicholas Negroponte of MIT to discuss how the U.S. Embassy can assist the "One Laptop per Child" (OLPC) program, about to be launched in Argentina. Negroponte underlined his interest in working with the State Department and said he intended to incorporate an English language teaching component in the computers, as discussed with Undersecretary Hughes. The Ambassador offered to help facilitate the program, which has already received President Kirchner's endorsement. End Summary.

"One Laptop per Child" in Argentina

2. Ambassador Wayne invited MIT's Negroponte to the Residence immediately following the latter's meeting with President Kirchner to discuss the OLPC program and how the U.S. Embassy might be able to assist in moving the project forward here in Argentina. Commercial Counselor Brian Brisson and IT Industry Specialist Silvia Yaber also participated. Negroponte said he wanted to cooperate with the State Department, noting with regret that he had not met earlier in the program's planning stages with Undersecretary Karen Hughes. Negroponte said he intended to follow up on U/S Hughes' suggestion to incorporate English language teaching components into the laptops.

3. Negroponte advised the Ambassador that President Nstor Kirchner received him in order to sign an agreement to field-test 500 low-cost laptops in Argentine schools before the end of the year. If the test is successful, the Education Ministry will purchase one million such laptops next year to be distributed to low-income children in the public school system. The computers will cost USD 150 each. The purchase would be financed via loans from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Negroponte noted that Argentina will be one of the first five countries to enter the OLPC program, along with Brazil, Nigeria, Libya and Thailand.

4. Regarding Argentina, Negroponte said that both President Kirchner and Education Minister Filmus were enthused about the project. One issue to be resolved is whether the children who receive the laptops would get to keep them, as Negroponte envisions. Minister Filmus has suggested that the laptops be returned to the schools at the end of each school year.

¶5. More broadly, Negroponete shared with the Ambassador his personal annoyance over Intel's criticism of the OLPC program. He said Intel's announced intention to promote its own, much more costly low cost laptops "Classmate PC," was not a problem since it was really aimed at a different level of society and would contribute to driving down the prices for all laptops in the market. He told Ambassador Wayne that he was on his way to Brazil to meet with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to announce the program there and then to Thailand to ensure that the recently installed government would lend the same commitment to his program, as he was able to secure from the former prime minister.

¶6. Comment: The Ambassador reached out to Negroponete to offer the Embassy as a resource in developing the OLPC program in Argentina. Negroponete was receptive to the offer and very forthcoming in his comments on the GOA's plans for OLPC's launch and implementation in Argentina. The Embassy will monitor developments in the program and seek every opportunity to make clear our willingness to provide facilitative assistance as needed.

MATERA